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ABSTRACT

This study, part of a larger investigation of African immigrants to the United States, focused on the issues of the African immigrant's racial and ethnic identity in relation to African American counterparts and the struggle against Americanization for some of these immigrant students. Also studied were African immigrants' perceptions of themselves in the realm of education. Participants were a small sample of black African college students, who were voluntary immigrants. Personal interviews were conducted, and each participant completed a 20-question Likert-type scale. Many participants drew a clear distinction between themselves and African Americans, some because of attitudes of their parents. Immigrants generally believed there is a lack of unification among African Americans. Many immigrants expressed feelings of frustration and alienation because of a perceived lack of interest in African culture on the part of African Americans. Immigrants also often expressed disappointment at not being acknowledged as African by the African American community, but only being seen as "black." Many immigrants perceived that whites were more welcoming, showing more interest in African cultures than did African Americans. Interview reports provide many insights into the viewpoints of African immigrants. (Contains 16 references.) (SLD)

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African Immigrants in Higher Education

Racial and Ethnic Identity Development, Maintenance, and Support

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Literature Review Section

Focus of Research and Potential Significance

The discussion of the voluntary African immigrant population in the United States has been one frequently omitted in the discourse of higher education and research in general. Some have justified this exclusion with the idea that the population of African immigrants within the United States is too miniscule compared to other growing immigrant populations, to dedicate a large amount of energy towards its study. However, some researchers have begun to take a closer look at the unique experience of African immigrants within the United States and their growing numbers in the past decades. This project and the related literature review attempted to focus on literature that highlights issues in relation to African immigrant identity, within the area of higher education, in the United States. It attempted to explore the elements that are unique in this immigrant experience, and show how these elements intersect or influence their individual identities in higher education.

This research began as an investigation into the racial and ethnic identity of African immigrant students, staff, and faculty, within an institution of higher education, and the social support networks which may or may not allow them to be socially/ culturally integrated into the university. Tinto's (1975, 1987), Model of Institutional Departures asserts that student success within the area of higher education is influenced by academic and social support networks, or rather, how well students feel they are socially and academically integrated into the campus support networks and community. A college student's social integration in a university community, via "peer group associations, semi-formal extracurricular activities, and interaction with faculty and administrative personal", will help determine his or her capacity to remain in the higher educational system (p.107). Consequently, many students who drop out of college report that they felt less socially integrated into the college community.

One could assume that due to the fact that African immigrants have been reported to be one of the most highly educated immigrants groups (Dodoo, 1997; Butcher, 1994), their retention and progress towards graduation within the higher education arena would not come into question. However, Rong and Brown (2001), found that "Africans [immigrants] have the lowest college completion rate at 5.1%" compared to their sample

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of Caribbean and European immigrant counterparts(p.536). This research began in order to explore reasons for this discrepancy.

Another focus of this project was to explore research pertaining to African immigrants in general. While some researchers have addressed African immigrant racial/ethnic identity issues within the United States (Phinney, 1999), there has been no major research as to how African immigrant racial/ethnic identity issues intersect with their social support networks within the area of higher education. Ogbu (1991) touches on this topic in his discussion of the voluntary and involuntary minority's discrepancy towards educational aspiration, but he fails to focus specifically on the African immigrant. This project explores these issues further.

Focus of this paper

Although the full research project conducted focuses on the above named issues, this particular paper will only focus on a pertinent segment of the full research conducted and the results received. The issues of African immigrant's racial and ethnic identity in relation to their African Americans counterparts, the struggle against Americanization and African immigrant's perceptions of themselves in the realm of education will be the focuses of this paper. Results obtained in relation to African immigrants support networks (institutional/campus, family, and community support) will not be cover in this paper, although it is covered in the full research project.

Defining the African Immigrant

For the purpose of clarification, delineation should be made as to the specific population of African immigrants to which this discussion of identity and social support networks within higher education is being directed towards. White African immigrants are not included in this review. The term 'African immigrants' will be used to refer to voluntary Black African immigrants for the duration of this paper. Other immigrant categories, such as West Indians, Puerto Ricans, Haitians, Egyptians, Moroccans, and the African American racial/ethnic category, will also be excluded from the study (except in a comparative perspective), due to the complexities of their national origin, voluntary

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and involuntary nature of their immigration, and specific components of their ethnic composition (Ogbu, 1991).

The Population

To gain a better understanding of identity issues that may confront African immigrants in higher education, one should aspire to understand the population themselves; the composition of the group and some of the major reasons they choose to immigrate to this part of the world. In the past few decades, there has been an increase in the immigration of Africans to the United States, beginning in1965 with the establishment of the Immigration and Nationalization Act also termed the 'family unification and refugee law'. This law made kinship ties the primary rationing device for admitting new immigrants to the United States (Kamya,1997, p.2; Dodoo,1997; Center for Immigration Studies; Hawk, 1988). It also repealed the "national origin quotas" which were formally in place for many countries, and "imposed ceiling on immigration from [the] Western Hemisphere for the first time", the point of origin from which mass amounts of European immigrants have previously come into the United States (Fix & Passel, 1994, p.9). This act has been key in allowing many African immigrant students and professionals to come to the United States to participate in the American educational system, via the category of family kinship. Before this time, many of the African immigrants came in the form of refugees and stayed for political asylum. This category also increased in 1980 with the Refugee Act of 1980, which amongst other actions, redefined refugee status "according to international, versus ideological standards," and helped increase the number of Somali immigrants in the Untied States (Fix & Passel, 1994, p.9; Putman & Noor,1993, p.2).

Demographically, many African immigrants are male, due to the high travel cost that can prove difficult to many female immigrants. African males are more likely to have higher levels of education, increasing their ability to afford international migration (Peli, 1995). The most frequent countries of origin for Black African immigrants include Nigeria, Ethiopia, Ghana, and South Africa (Rong & Brown, 2001). In the case of Nigeria, this is most likely due to its coastal location, technological advancement in relation to travel and communication, and identification with an 'anglophone' language.

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Past colonization and affiliations with English speaking countries resulted in the English proficiency of many African immigrants (Dodoo, 1997).

Many different issues cause Africans to choose the option of immigration to the United States. According to Uchem (2001), most of the immigrants who immigrated to the United States in the past came via sponsorships from "a White individual or a predominately White churches"(p.1). Gordon (1998) asserts that other immigrants migrated due to unstable political structures in their home countries, globalization, and the expansion of the world economy. In 1975, Ghanaians migrated to the United States to improve their standards of living and obtain greater economic opportunities (Peli, 1995). Takougnag (1995) states that although many African countries have made attempts to adopt concepts of democracy in their political structures, progress is slow and chaotic situations remain, forcing many to immigrate to other parts of the world, including the US. Brill (1999) joins in the discussion by asserting that "the implementation of more restrictive immigration pollicies in the United Kingdom (requiring entry visas for person from several of its ex-colonial states), France (with the deportation of illegal immigrants), and a long period of economic recession in Western Europe, shifted African migration flow from Europe to the Untied States"(p.2). Consequentially, between the years of 1965 and 1992, about 2.25 million African immigrants entered the United States to comprise between 2 and 3 percent of the immigrant population in the United States in 1993, and less than one percent of the US population (Kamya, p.2). These numbers continue to grow.

Why do they come? Many come for education.

Ogbu (1991) asserts that voluntary minorities have higher expectations as to the return of education than involuntary minorities (African Americans) who are more aware of the racial discrepancies in the United States and understand that a high educational status does not necessary lead to acceptance into American society. For that reason, the pursuit of a better lifestyle through the acquisition of educational advancement seems to be one of the main reasons why Africans immigrate to the United States and pursue higher education. In 1991, there were about 24,000 African immigrants students attending US colleges and university, a number which continues to increase (Matory,

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2001). Some take advantage of the US international visa programs, which include the categories of F-1 (college or university attendance), M-1 (vocational or non-academic institutional training), and J-1 (visitor with specified knowledge and skills)(Student visas, 2001, p.1). Research and census data have shown that African immigrants are amongst the highest educated of all immigrants to the Untied States and that many come in pursuit of graduate education (Dodoo, 1997; Butcher, 1994). In relation to secondary school enrollment in the US, Dodoo (1997) asserts that "amongst males age 16 years and older, black African immigrants have the highest school enrollment rates both in 1980 and 1990, followed by white Africans, and native blacks". Butcher (1994) asserts that "among females age 16 years and older, black Africans still have the highest school enrollment rates, but they were followed by native blacks in 1980, and white Africans in 1990" (p.4). Many African parents come to believe that the educational opportunities afforded their children in America will enhance their future by equipping them with "the technical expertise they will need to land a good job… enter the job market and make money" (Monga, 2000). The acquisition of partial job training for their children then becomes the focus of immigration and the center of family life. Indirectly, some parents "aspire to improve their standard of living by way of their children" through education. The children are expected to become educated, gain successful employment, and support the family in America through their income or by sending money back to the family in Africa. "Some African women adopt a long-term strategy and arrange to give birth in the United States so that their children, as American citizens, will later have the option of returning to pursue their education" (Monga, 2000, p.30). Regardless of the implications, many African parents simply desire to increase the competitiveness of their children in the global job market through the acquisition of western education.

In regards to educational pursuits, many women themselves immigrate to the United States to acquire educational opportunities that are not equally afforded to females in African countries as they are to the males of the society. For example, although the freedom to pursue education is given to the people by the government regardless of gender, the norms of Nigerian society still restrict educational pursuits for women, causing a decline in female enrollment and participation in secondary education (Lee & Lockhead, 1998, p.207). For this reason, many women immigrate for the sake of raising

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educated daughters who will fetch a higher bride price when they return to the country for marriage. Within my study, I have selected a sample of both African immigrant males and females, in the hopes of encountering data on some of these gender discrepancies in the decision to immigrate, and exploring the different ways in which Africans in higher education negotiate gender expectations within their own culture while in a US institution of higher learning. These expectations and their effects may become important within the discussion of social support networks that African immigrants employ.

Although Africans immigrate to the United States for numerous reasons and many do so voluntarily, it is not surprising that this transition brings conflict into the lives of many African immigrants. The following sections will attempt to address such conflicts and the manner in which African immigrant students, faculty and staff may deal with such conflicts within the realm of higher education, within the area of identity.

Identity issues

The complexities in studying the intersection between social support networks and identity for US-residing African immigrants in higher education, is one embedded in the intersection between racial identity (categorization), ethnic identity, ethnic origin, and acculturation (Americanization), in relation to the situation in the United States. Kamya (1997) captures these complexities in stating:

> Although African immigrants share a number of similarities with African Americans, the question of ethnic identity formation may vary. African immigrants in the United States may see themselves as black people, immigrants, or distinct ethnic groups. These levels are compounded by African immigrants' own self- perception, the immediate host community's (African Americans') perception, and the general ordering of forces within the larger host community (the United States). The interactive processes of these levels will determine the unfolding of African immigrants' ethnic identity. (p.14)

In light of these complexities, I present some research and writings that have been done in relation to the identity formation of this group of people. This includes definitions of the major constructs presented in the paper. Although definitions of the following constructs may vary according to different researchers (Phinney, 1990, p.47), a working definition of Americanization, racial identity and ethnic identity will be given in each section in order to understand the constructs that are being observed in this review.

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Racial Identity

According to Janet Helms (1994), the definition of racial identity includes aspects of the "quasi-biological, sociopolitical-historical, and cultural" (p.297). The quasi-biological focuses on the "visible aspects of a person that are assumed to be racial in nature, such as skin color, hair texture, or physiognomy". The sociopolitical-historical refers to the "racial group's sociopolitical history and experience of domination and/ or subjugation" (p.298). The 'cultural race' of an individual can then be defined as "the customs, traditions, products, and values of … a racial group" (p.300). Within these three defined constructs reside the elements of an individual's racial identity.

In relation to African immigrants to the United States, the concept of race seems to be one encountered with confusion, requiring the learning of new ways of knowing (Rong & Brown,2001, p.542). Some may encounter what Deng (1995) refers to as 'racial identity crisis', which he describes as "a confusion between what people objectively are and what they perceive themselves to be"(p.12). During the age of the dismantling of the institution of slavery in America, the same experienced was encountered by 'Mulattos', 'Creoles, and 'house slaves' who were not "psychologically ready for the experience of being lumped in with Blacks" and therefore, experience racial discrimination (Coombs, 1993, p.2; Matory, 2001). American societal labeling of African immigrants into the racial category of 'black', a categorization laden with issues of prejudice and discrimination, may cause some immigrants confusion in accepting a black racial identity with a negative 'sociopolitical-historical' reference. According to Toni Morrison (1993), the Americanization of immigrants, including African immigrants, has traditionally involved implementing the view of Blacks as non-citizens in America:

> Popular culture, shaped by film, theater, advertising, the press, television, and literature, is heavily engaged in race talk. It participates freely in this most enduring and efficient rite of passage into American culture: negative appraisal of the native-born black population, ...the move into mainstream America always means buying into the notion that American blacks are the real aliens. Whatever the ethnicity or nationality of the immigrant, his nemesis is understood to be African American…. A hostile posture toward resident blacks must be struck at the Americanizing door before it will open. The public is asked to accept American blacks as the common denominator in each conflict between an immigrant and a job or between a wannabe and status. It hardly matters what complexities, contexts and misinformation accompany these conflicts. They can all be subsumed as the equation of brand X vs. blacks. (Morrison, 1993, p. 57)

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Within these established negative perceptions of black racial identity, many African immigrants to the United States, as well as black immigrants from place such as the West Indies, find alienation and stress in relation to feelings of being black (Nwadiora, 1996; Kamya, 1997;Coomb, 1993). Bhave (2001) studied the "social and economic experiences of Ethiopian immigrant women in the Chicago", and highlights the experiences of this group. Although Ethiopians would not historically consider themselves Black or African American in the traditional sense of the word, they became labeled as such when immigrating and residing in the United States. While reflecting on the complexities of such an experience, the researcher concludes that many of her Ethiopian female informants arrived in the U.S. as "middle class women" and became labeled as "working class blacks", indicating that the process of immigration was one laden with racial and gender categorization, as well as social class. For the racially categorized Black African immigrant, the experience can be a negative one.

Although the identification and categorization of individuals by race is a prominent practice in the United States, the concept of ethnicity also plays a prominent part in an individual's identification. This experience can be even more prevalent in the life of an immigrant coming from a different culture, into the heterogeneous, yet uniquely distinct American culture. Consequently, within society and higher education, a newly immigrated African immigrant may encounter issues dealing with their ethnic identity in relation to their specific home country, and what some may see as a conflicting force against that ethnic identity, Americanization.

Ethnic Identity and Americanization

According to Martha E. Bernal and George P. Knight, ethnic identity can be defined within the following boundaries:

> Ethnic identify is one aspect of the important question, "who am I?" It constitutes a basic part of the ethnic individual's personality, and is a powerful contributor to ethnic group formation, maintenance, and social ties. It is a psychological construct, a set of self-ideas about one's own ethnic group membership, and it is multidimensional in that it has several dimensions or components along which these self ideas vary. For instance, one dimension along which people's views of their ethnic selves vary is self-identification. Self –identifications refers to the ethnic labels or terms that people use in identifying themselves, and to the meanings of these labels. Another dimension is people's knowledge about their ethnic culture: its traditions, customs, values, and behaviors.... A third dimension is the preferences, feelings, and values that people have

about their ethnic group membership and culture. Ethnic people may embrace, reject, or have neutral feelings and preferences about their ethnic families, companions, and cultural values. (p.10)

The acquisition of an ethnic identity may be learned and obtained through socialization in one's home culture, but the retention of one's identity may be challenged in a new environment by acculturation, and in the United States, Americanization. What is Americanization? The concept of Americanization has traditionally been associated with the notion of whiteness and prestige, directing most immigrants to aspire for white middle class standards for themselves and their children. The belief was that identifying with values of the dominant White culture would lead to the acquisition of a prosperous life style, the 'American Dream'. While most immigrants venture to America with this false perception in mind, racially White immigrants may be seen as encountering fewer struggles in their transition into American culture than their African counterparts, because of their categorization into the 'White race' through American racial stratification. In their study about US immigration during the late 19th century and early 20th century, Barrett and Roediger (1997) found that White immigrants, "Polish, Russian, Italian and Slav artisans and peasants, were placed above African Americans and Asians but below 'White' people. … Americanization was perceived in a racial sense, with becoming American meaning becoming White" (p. 3). White immigrants were therefore more welcomed into the American culture, their values and ethnic identity considered to be very similar to that of American society. The African immigrant on the other hand, is not only valued below the White immigrant, but does not find the same positive confirmation in ethnic identity with the African American community that the White immigrants has with the dominant White population, due to the negative portrayal of African Americans in the United States (this subject will be further explored in the section titled: African verses African American).

Aside from the expectation to transfer life goals to that of the middle class White culture, Americanization is also targeted towards the re-socialization and modification of the concrete values of immigrant cultures; for example, the socialization towards individualistic ideals and thought "versus a collective, social, and interdependent orientation" (Greenfield & Cocking, 1994, p. 435). Nevertheless, one must question the

bases and validity of this process. As author Nkiru Nzegwu (2001) states in reference to the American perception of Africans, "The preposterous idea that we… function only at the level of group consciousness is an invidious ploy, designed to obliterate our initiative and resourcefulness. It tries to succeed by robbing us of the very human basis in which individuality flourishes" (p. 1). Although many African societies have communities that function collectively to support individuals in that society, the dogma that Africans lack individualism has been and continues to be over simplified in American culture, a concept which strangely contradicts the Darwinian belief in the survival of the fittest individual, one of the basic cannons of American academia. Nevertheless, American ideologies and values compensate for its simplicity in the complex manner in which it has chosen to acculturate immigrants who come to enter her borders. Not only does American popular culture, technological media, and society serve as accomplices in this highly capitalistic process, but the goals are institutionalized and implemented in the American school system, teaching children what it means to be a 'good' American.

As aforementioned, many issues influence African immigrant identity within the United States (racial and ethnic identity, Americanization, language, etc). However, one of the great contributors to the conflict in identity that some African encounter within the US is attributed to racial categorization, especially in relation to African Americans. The following section will exploring this sometimes conflicting category of 'Blackness' and give insight into some impacts that it may have on African immigrants within higher education.

Africans and African Americans

The contrasting relationship between Africans and African Americans is likely a consequence of the misrepresentation of one group to the other in the process of immigrant acculturation and Americanization. Two majors issues involved in the discussion of this relationship is one, the notion of African ethnic identity in relation to their African American descendants in the United States, and secondly, the two groups seemingly contrasting views towards education in the United States. As mentioned before, Morrison (1993), asserted that this perception is a result of Americanization and the implementation of Blacks as non-citizens in American (1993, p.57). The impact of

this false representation of African Americans directly influences the identity formation of African immigrants and the children of African immigrants who may be in the midst of developing a new form of ethnic identity through popular culture and interactions in the school setting. In the study of immigrant children, Olneck (1999) states that immigrant children develop a sense of ethnic identity from a combination of fighting to retain elements of their native culture, while attempting to become Americans (p. 319). With the negative publicity about African Americans, these African children can receive little support from their African American counterparts.

In a study of political issues facing African Americans, O'sullivan (1995) states that the United States has "a concept of Americanism in which immigrants with a strong work ethic are somehow more 'American' than unemployed black fellow citizens (p. 94). For this reason, many African American coalitions have taken a opposing stance to skilled immigrants and highly educated labor entering the United States, due to the idea that such immigrants assist in excluding domestic minorities from "well-paying, mid- and high-level technical and scientific jobs"(Migration World Magazine, 2000, p.1). In contrast to stereotypes about African Americans, the African immigrant is frequently associated with discipline and strong work ethics.

Although the characterizations are sometimes distinguished differently, American society does not make a clear distinction between the African ethnic identity and the African – American racial identity. As Martha Nussbaum (1998) notes, "African American culture is by now irretrievably different from any known African culture or cultures, past or present" (p. 168). Nevertheless, they are both constructed under the ambiguous category of 'Blackness'. Therefore, a unique and conflicting element is introduced into the African immigrant's struggle for a new ethnic identity when placed in the racial category that holds stereotypically negative connotation in American society. Consequentially, the creation of an ethnic identity that combines African and African American identity becomes problematic and contributes to the division between voluntary Africans (those who immigrated freely to the United States) and involuntary Africans (those Africans who came to the US as slaves) in the United States (Ogbu,1991).

Notions of ethnic identity between these two groups also produce contrasting views towards the acquisition of education in the United States. According to Ainworth-Darnel & Dowey (1998), the "oppositional culture[s] explanation for racial disparities in school performance posits the individuals from historically oppressed groups (involuntary minorities)[African-Americans] signify their antagonism toward the dominant group by resisting school goals. In contrast, individuals from the dominant group and groups that migrated freely to the host country (immigrant minorities) [Africans] maintain optimistic views of their chances for educational and occupational success" (p. 536). On one hand, the inference made in reference to the African American resistance of the dominant cultural "power and authority" structure (Wertsch, 1998, p. 64) through the dismissal of US education is noted. However, one must call to question the holistic validity of this statement by noting that the author has failed to take into consideration the many facets of being an involuntary immigrant and the psychological wounds such a process institutes. For example, the stereotypical representation of African Americans in US society, as fore-mentioned, is itself an infected wound. Wertsch (1998) discusses a study with examines "how negative stereotypes about a group might interfere with the cognitive performance of the members of that group, especially under conditions of frustration and stress" --i.e. test taking conditions for African American college students (p. 170). In the case of the African Americans, resistance against the dominant culture serves to compose only a small portion of the massive struggle this group has encountered and continues to encounter in American history. The repeated acts of oppression and current struggles within the community must be taken into consideration when passing judgment on their views towards education, which is stereotypically general to say the least. Contrary to the author's belief, education is very valued in the African American community. It is the resources to pursue and acquire education that is problematic. In this sense, the African American and the African immigrant are similar in nature; for they both aspire to educate their children in a country that has shown itself to be riddled with racial discrimination. Nevertheless, one group ventures to the United States in search of the opportunity to become educated, and the other group searches in their own backyard.

Methodology and Design

The proposed research project will focus on the sub-population of Black Africans of immigrant status in the United States, within the area of higher education. This exploratory study will have an in-dept focus on a small, non-generalizable sample of this population. Specific attention will be lent to the issues faced by first-generation African students and professionals in the area of academia. The continuous interpretation and analysis of the data gathered from the project will hopefully provide some new insight into issues facing African immigrant students and professionals, leading to further insight into the subject of immigration in general and potential solutions to the immigrants' situation in the United States. Such data will not only add to the advancement of our social and political policies in relation to immigrants, but to the advancement of the academic agenda on the subject of educating immigrants. The research will also lend insight into the struggles of African immigrant students in the area of higher education; transitional issues, academic and cultural implications and hopefully, suggestions for improved connectives from the mouths of the African immigrants themselves.

In relation to the methodology, particularly the site of the study, the University of California Santa Barbara is a very unique university amongst the various UC campuses. The demography and environment of the campus is not only distinct in its geographic location (hours between Los Angles and San Francisco), but is very unique in its ethnic compositions. Although the ethnic composition of the campus changes from year to year, White racially identified students tend to have the most prominence in number on campus. In the academic year of 2000-2001, the Office of Budget and Planning at UCSB reported that while 63% of its undergraduate students and 73% of its graduate students are of White radicalization identification, only three percent of the remaining populations are of African American racial categorization. (This number has been higher in previous years). Only one percent of the current UCSB population is a foreign student, African immigrants making composing a small number in that population. One can therefore assume that many African American and/or African students entering such an environment may experience various levels of culture shock, as well as the feeling of isolation within certain classroom environment.

In relation to academic departments of study, the University of California Santa Barbara currently has the Department of Black Studies with undergraduate and graduate course offerings, and The Center for Black Studies, which conducts research in the field. However, these departments have a predominantly African American studies focus, both in the specifics of courses offered and research conducted. In relation, although the University has recently established the West African Ensemble through the Music department, the University does not have an African Studies department. Due to the collective circumstance in relation to the academic and social focus on African Culture at UCSB, the campus presents itself as a unique, yet appropriate site for the intended research.

Qualitative and quantitative methodologies during data collection and analysis. However, the main methods of data collection for this research project will be personal interviews with individual first-generation African students and professionals in the area of higher education, an opinion questionnaire, and a demographics questionnaire.
The sample or informants included _____
Student class standing (freshmen, sophomore, junior, or senior) will not be taken into consideration in the selection of the sample, but may become relevant in data analysis. Interview types will include semi- structured interviews and conversational style- open-ended interviewing techniques, depending on the interviewees' personas and cultural styles.

A 20 question Likert scale questionnaire will be administered to each interviewee at the end of the first interview process. The questionnaire will include varies opinion questions concerning their feelings toward academic and social support networks provided to African immigrants within higher education and their campus specifically. (If necessary, a second questionnaire may be administered at the end of the second interview process.) The questionnaire will also include structured demographic questions in relation to issues such as the level of education and duration of time in the United States.

Coding of interview data will be conducting, exploring for specific categories corresponding to issues that emerged from the collected data and the literature review.

A statistical tabulation of the Likert questionnaire will be conducted in relation to prevalent and unique characteristics that are similar or different amongst the informants

interviewed . If relevant, the tabulation will include information from the interview transcripts.

Results Section

The experience of black African immigrants has been previously ignored amongst researchers in higher education. Students, staff, and faculty, in their immigrant status, encounter many situations within education that can come to influence their values, perceptions, and ultimately, their identity, while in the university setting. As an individual who has trod these grounds, I sought to seek out the voices of other Africans who have been on the immigrant journey, and lend time to their voices. I anticipated that the interviewees would be more comfortable in sharing their experiences with me, believing that we may have shared experiences and understanding within an 'African immigrant cultural frame' of thinking (Tannen, 1993). Special attention had to be paid to our dual roles as listener/questioner and narrator/respondent, in order to increase the comfort level, as well as the credibility of the data (Mishler, 1991, pg. 100). In the analysis below, I will do so by shedding some light on the similarities and differences in the responses that these individuals gave to the questions they were asked in relation to their identity (racially and ethnically), their identity in relation to African Americans, and the support systems that they use to maintain their identity at this stage of their life. The reader will find that the narratives and quoted responses that these individuals gave not only bring a more vivid sense of reality to some in the population of African immigrants, but open the door to asking many questions about the connection between identity and race in the United States. Many of the responses are presented in a narrative format, which is according to Mishler (1991), "a mode through which individuals express their understanding of events and experiences"(pg. 68). However, the narratives have been dismantled in the process of analysis, to make the data more coherent and applicable to thematic issues emerging from this group of informants.

Racial Identity: Africans and African Americans

For some of the informants, perceptions of the African American cultural group began in their various countries of origin in Africa. From that vantagepoint, some saw African Americans as a group of people to imitate, due to various stereotypical popular culture representations broadcast around the world in relation to this group of people:

> Many young people in Africa want to come to US because of what you see every time in the TV, in the video clip, in the music and all other kind of music. So many African young people want to be like them (Pink).
>
> When I was in Benin, people there thought very highly of them. The 'in' thing was to talk like an African American. The 'in' thing was to act like them, to be like them. (Green)

Others immigrated with what could be interpreted by some as a negative perception of the group, also learned from various media sources in their native country:

> When I was in middle school in Nigeria and in elementary school, I learned that these people were cruel, and that I didn't fit in, that's what. I learned that I didn't fit in, I learned that there was a lot of self-hatred within the race. (Gold Star)

Nevertheless, an act that Morrison (1993) attributes to Americanization occurs: the negative perception of African Americans by immigrants to the United State (pg. 57). Similarly, many of my informants learned, experienced, and sometimes developed various perceptions and constructed meanings in relation to the African American identity. The referential and ideological meanings of what was stated can be interpreted as somewhat negative, based on their personal encounters within the educational environment or things that they heard vocalized about the group within other venues. Research has supported the idea that African immigrants to the United States find alienation and stress in relation to feelings of being black (Coomb, 1993; Kamya, 1997; Nwadiora, 1996). In this respect, many of the individuals interviewed perceived the group as being 'confused' 'displaced' 'struggling' with their identity, or 'unhappy' with their racial identity. When asked what they had learned about African Americans while attending elementary, junior high, or high school in the Untied states, some related a perception that there is a racial and ethnic identity struggle within the group, an idea that they as immigrants found difficulty in understanding:

> I feel that lots to them have a complex about their race and so forth. I felt so proud to be Nigerian, to be black. I remember I was part of this group and we would have fundraisers. We would make a lot of money because the rich people would give you a lot of money if you would wash their cars. So I suggested that to the student organization, and this is an organization with a lot of black people in it. They felt that they would not want to have the car wash there because they felt that because of their race, they would not be treated well. I got annoyed by this because I thought how would you know if you didn't try it. So they constantly feel that because of their race, they can't do anything. I am not saying that this isn't true for African Americans. That didn't even cross my mind. I had this perception that they should at least try it to see what happens, not that I'm not going to try this because I'm scared. I mean I know about this whole skin color thing and good hair thing. I mean I'm not saying that it doesn't exist in Nigeria, but I've never felt any awkwardness about my dark skin or I wish I had light skin or things like that. So it's interesting that I know people who still have an issue with that here. (Red)

> Well, there is a struggle for identity. There is, from what I know, and what I know I know it from teaching African-Americans or also reading some African-American issues. You certainly have this view of indefinite struggle of defining themselves, so this is clear for me. (Black)

Others seem to find the African American ethnic and racial identity un-encompassing of them as African immigrants and members of the Diaspora, but inside holding a hierarchical viewpoint. The perception that African immigrants are more in tune with their African cultures, because they come directly from the continent, leads many in American society to believe that they have a stronger identity structure and have greater knowledge of their origins than African Americans who were historically removed from their original place of origin (Nzegwu, 2001, pg. 1). Consequently, some Africans and African Americans seem to place themselves hierarchically in relation to their knowledge about their identity and who has a better advantage because of this knowledge:

> They were positive in the sense that they were excited that I was from Africa. On the other hand, they were like, "oh wow, she's African. Africans always think that they are better than us". There was that automatic wall given to me, like they hear my name and they're like 'oh another African, and she thinks she's better than us'. But then secondly, they just recognize the fact that 'She's still an African', but I never really felt comfortable around them. When I was in Benin, people there thought very highly of them. In coming here, the African Americans were like, 'you Africans, you think you're it, You work really hard, you kiss ass, you do all the things that get you where you want to go', and it just that whole withdrawal right there. (Green)

Finally, putting aside their observed, learned and experienced views of African Americans, some of the interviewees seem to gained an understanding of their perceived state of confusion in the African American racial and ethnic identity:

> Basically like they are kind of looked down on. I didn't really know anything when I came here, but it was kind of odd to see like people were just scared of them and they are violent people. From what I have learned from African Americans themselves, they kind of feel out of place because they kind of can't go to Africa because they don't know where they are from and they consider America their home, but they're kind of rejected by Americans. (Orange)

Consequentially due to the above noted perceptions of frustration, struggle, and confusion within the African American racial and ethnic identity, many of the informants sought to distinguish themselves identity wise, from African Americans, because of what they heard and experienced with the group. (The use of the personal pronouns 'I' (self), and 'they' (for African Americans), was frequently used to make this distinction) (Linde, 1993, pg. 90). Some made these distinctions in part, due to the instructive support from their parents:

> I heard black people were lazy as hell. And like, especially from my parents it was like "you're not black" always understand that, you're African. There's a gigantic difference. We're not the same people. (Gold Star)

Other made the distinction in order to disassociate him or herself from a negative stereotypes that had been in place of the African American racial and ethnic group, distinguishing themselves as different or opposite from this because of national origin, values and customs. As in the literature, the issue of strong work ethics amongst African immigrant as opposed to those of African Americans in the United States emerged and was used as a differentiating element by some (Butcher, 1994):

> It was weird because I was like, well these people have to be lazy because they have every single resource. I would hear about mothers on welfare and fathers on this and that, and like that just didn't happen in my house. It didn't happen to my family, no one. My uncle came here on a scholarship in '68 and he brought my dad in '80 and then like my other uncle started coming so like everyone always worked two or three jobs. So I couldn't understand some of it. What I really learned that was like people were really lazy. (Gold Star)

Also present were issues of inter-racial separation and discrimination within the African American racial group (one that is present in every group). This perception has the capacity to lead to the idea that there is a lack of unification within the group, causing many immigrants of African origin (including black West Indian immigrants to the

United States), to forcefully distinguish themselves from that group in society (Butcher, 1994). Although this informant is aware of his categorization into the black racial group, he still makes a distinction them as 'they':

> I heard from white people, from watching the news and things like that, from just seeing stereotypes and reading lots of things in high school about accounts of what people would say they're like. 'These people don't know how to stick together'. I saw this also and I'm like that; why don't we stick together? It was funny to me like [because it feels like] you're a losing team. It's like I looked at our race as a losing team. The reason we're a losing team is because first of all we don't have any self-confidence and we don't like each other and we don't play with each other, and like we don't work within each other. So that's what I learned a lot. (Gold Star)

Others make their distinction from African Americans on an educational basis, seeing themselves as having better preparation towards and greater potential to succeed in education within the United States (African immigrant identity within education will be further explored in an upcoming section). This view point somewhat takes in the perception that African Americans have "oppositional identity" towards education and the educational system, causing them to be more suspicious and resistant to academic achievement (Ogbu, 1991). In contrast, Africans immigrants may assert a 'distinctive' identity in relation to education, for the above noted reasons concerning their racial/ethnic/cultural relationships with African Americans. As Morrison (1993) stated, immigrants, as well as African immigrants, become indoctrinated with these ideas of African Americans as a part of the acculturation process into American culture and society. Nevertheless, many immigrants, without full understand of the theory behind this concept of opposition to education, observe and experience situations that may lead them to support such viewpoints:

> Everyone's like "oh, you're black" and I'm like, "no' I'm not black, I'm African or Nigerian". I don't know if my experience is different, I think it has just made me a better person, more respectful and so forth, more responsible. I'm hard working. I feel like after that [School in Africa], coming here, I think it was a little bit easier for me to adjust to school here and the class. You know how some people complain that it's so much work? I mean I know that it's a lot of work, but being that I've gone through that... (Red)

Along with the act of distinguishing themselves as different from African Americans because of various experiences, coupled with the desire to retreat from negative stereotypes, some informants expressed feelings of frustration and alienation by what they perceived as African Americans' lack of interest in African cultures.

Sentiments included the idea that African Americans either refuse to acknowledge various African cultures or see it as a threat to themselves and their identity:

> I feel like most African-Americans they don't try to learn about African culture, and they just try to take this skin and they're like "oh, I'm African-American and dah, dah, dah". But they don't really know our beliefs. So it just hurts me that they don't try to learn about Africa. That's what I'm learning. Like it seems like they don't care and I want them to care. (Yellow)

In relation to teaching and learning about African culture in the United States, one staff member expressed what seemed to be hurt and frustration with the act of imparting knowledge of his culture to African Americans, something that he expressed great interest in doing, both personally and professionally:

> I'm not here to make money with my culture. If Westerners wanted to make money with their culture, no Africans would be interested. Okay, I'm [wanted] to teach a class but also I wanted have an ensemble. I want to have a class like an ensemble and [thought] that a lot of people would be interested in it. Everyone who is interested in African culture can come to learn. In the beginning, I had some few students. I had thirteen students but just one African-American. He came to the class. We had two classes and I wanted to teach him something really special. After two classes he disappeared. When he meets me on campus, [it's] like he doesn't want to see me. What's going on? I don't have a problem with you, you're my brother, you're my friend, and you're a student! So, you know it seems like to this day I've never seen him. He told me at the end of last quarter, the fall quarter, that he would be back this quarter but when I met him in this quarter he said, "you know I'm a graduate student and yaddah, yaddah, yaddah", okay! Please, I don't want to bother someone! I'm here to exchange with people. If you don't want to exchange I'm not here to tell you please to come to learn my culture. No no no. I want you to be interested. (Pink)

In relation to his understanding of African American culture in the United States, the interviewee expressed his perception of a lack of genuineness its composition. This is mainly due to the idea that African American culture diverged from its native root of traditional African cultures and became a unique cultural expression of its own under the devastating conditions of slavery. This perception of African Americans lack of knowledge and understanding of their native roots and culture, seems to add to the frustration that this African immigrant feels in what he perceives to be African American lack of interest in African culture:

> For African-Americans, [from] what I know right now [are] disinterested in their own culture because the culture they have here is not them. This culture has been created for the occasion because they were here and they didn't want to do like the white men. So "what are we gonna do?" Okay: create something. But their own culture, their African culture, they don't want to see it because they think that they have already their own

culture. So they don't want to see this part of their culture. They don' t realize that a culture is not what you are creating quickly because of when you are, but a culture is something from behind you—many years, many centuries behind you. For me, that is culture, so it is important for them to know it. (Pink)

Along with this frustration about the pedagogy of African immigrant culture in the United States, this interviewee seemed to have a conflicting issue with not being acknowledged by African Americans culturally as an African immigrant, and inside being only acknowledged and identified because of a racial categorization as black. As did another informant, this interviewee showed frustration at the lack of recognition and appreciation of his African culture:

> African-Americans, they have something [that] I realize when they see you [and] you are black, they tell you "hello, hi, how's it going", because you are black. I was at the UCen and, I was eating and another African-American girl took a bowl and to come to my table and she asks me, "could I share your table"? I said, "sure". We talked a little bit, and when she realized that I was from Africa (her mother is from Somalia and her father is African-American) when she realized I was from Africa, we discussed a little bit about Africa and when she sees me now in the street, never tell me hello. Never! I don't know why. She totally ignores me and...okay! (Pink)

As noted above, although many of these informants have learned and seem to hold some disheartening perceptions about their experiences with African Americans, many continue to seek understand of and connection with the racial group. Some are impacted by mentors and role models in the African American community that counter some of the negative learned stereotypes and frustrating experiences that they may have had with other individuals in the group:

> It's weird. It's one of those things where it's not on the surface. Everything that I saw from the surface or was told on the surface was negative. When you look deep down it's like there's a lot of good things going on. And I see a lot of people who sacrifice their time, because there's not a lot of resources in my neighborhood. And so, like Dr. Singleton, one of my teachers in high school. He was my academic decathlon coach and they're supposed to get a salary and a stipend for that. He didn't get a stipend and he didn't get like a budget pretty much. Like, he needed to spend six thousand in order to get three thousand, so he put up the extra money for us. So that's what's going on. The people say oh, your school is really bad and your SAT average is low, but Dr. Singleton is there. So it was all that kind of stuff that went on. But on TV and stuff like that, all you hear is basketball-shoot and miss, making that and it's weird but it's pretty negative. (Gold Star)

Some encounter lasting friendships with African Americans that provide different presentations of the racial group, due to the intimacy established in the relationships:

> My nickname from the time I was fifteen years old was blackie. Like my best friend, I call him my cousin Sam, he still calls me blackie to this day. He still makes African jokes and he's family for the most part. We do everything together and he still makes African jokes. Like, he's like "did you go kill any lions" and stuff like that, just funny stuff. I don't know but they're always there for me. Like in the neighborhood there's a lot of reinforcement. Like you might think that people don't care [for each other] but when it comes down to it, you get it. (Gold Star)

> One of my friends, she's an African American, but she's not a typical African American. She's one that has maybe lived in a white neighborhood. So she doesn't, even if she has those ideas, she's never asked me. She's not like ' I'm superior to her' so we are on the same level. Even today, I still don't associate, I associate with them, but I don't connect, there is no connection. (Green)

Others continue to search for a connection with the African American community, one hopefully based on an individual, ethnic, and cultural understanding of the similarities and differences in African cultures and the African experience in the Untied States. One could assert that the hope is not only to gain a true and realistic understanding of the bases of African American culture and it connection to African culture, but also to learn the appreciation of these two distinct types of cultural expressions for what they truly are. In accordance, this interviewee stated:

> So it's like if I see an African it's like "oh! I find another person like me". But if I see an African-American I can't believe that feeling, that energy. I want that connection. (Yellow)

Although many of the individuals interviewed presented a contrasting relationship with African Americans, their perceptions of white people were quite different. They perceived whites as more welcoming and showing more interest in their various African cultures than African Americans did. It can be interpreted that these immigrants therefore choose to align themselves more with whites as a social group, instead of facing isolation. Although some hold the realization that whites may not accept them either, there seems to be an association and somewhat of a comfort level with whites, for various reasons. Some are drawn to whites because of their interest in the 'exotic' nature of Africa:

> It was a bit of a struggle because on one hand, there's African American students, who you expect to welcome you with open arms , but they just withdraw from me. On the other hand, the white folks who are fascinated by [the idea] that I'm from a 'hell-hole/ Princess Paradise', but they are fascinated by the fact that you just came from somewhere. (Green)

Others feel justified and comforted by white interest in African culture, as opposed to what they perceive as African Americans' lack of interest in African culture:

> The white people, for example, are really interested in Africa because they want to learn about the continent now, because they don't know anything. When I say I'm from the Ivory Coast, some people go "Ivory Coast?" They don't know it. They even don't know the name Ivory Coast because you never hear it, so they want to learn. They are really interested [in] Africa and you just need to say, "I'm from Africa" as a way to talk to [them]. So I'll relate that back. African-Americans, from what I know right now, are disinterested in their own culture (Pink).

> The white people on the other hand, even if they don't know they will accept whatever answer I have given them and they will almost start changing whatever generalizations they had before. They are willing to learn they are willing to know more about other Africans. But on the other hand it's like, the African Americans, there's that whole, you know.... (Green)

> It's funny, I actually hang out with the really, really rich white kids who don't want to be really rich white kids. Like they don't want to behave that way and everyone else race-wise. I don't [have] a lot of normal UCSB white kid friends. (Gold Star)

Another explanation given for the comfort of association with whites as opposed to African Americans is rooted, once again, in the hierarchical perception by one group to the other, that one believes themselves to be more knowledgeable of their origin and roots, therefore better than the other:

> I feel intimidated by them [African Americans], so they feel like 'she probably thinks she's all that' and I feel like 'they probably think they're all that". (Green)

Although there seems to be some association to whites due to feelings of disassociation with African Americans, there is awareness that whites may not always be so welcoming or show interest in Africans and African cultures:

> The reality is that I will never fit in because, on one extreme is the African Americans who already have their generalized ideas of how Africans behave or how Africans see them. On the other side, if I'm going to be with white people, somehow or another, I know that I would not fit in, because there are still going to be those people who have those generalized ideas that they have about Africans. (Green)

Finally, in what some may interpret as a struggle to find a place in the United States, many of these individuals have constructed their own identity category, an 'African category', one which encompasses their racial and ethnic identity and distinguishes them from their African American counterparts. To counter Deng's (1995)

assertion that African immigrants experience a sort of 'racial identity crisis', which he describes as "a confusion between what people objectively are and what they perceive themselves to be", there may be the creation of new categorization(pg.12). When asked how each person would identify themselves racially within the United States, five out of the seven people interviewed stated that they identify racially as 'African' within the United States. The other two stated that they would identify as 'black', because there is usually no other box to check that would identity their African identity. Six out of the seven individuals stated that they found difficulties in identifying with the African American culture in the United States, and three out of four of the individuals agreed that being identified by others as 'black' is something that they are not completely comfortable with.

Whether the creation of an 'African' category would be in support of a struggle for difference is still fully unknown and will need further understanding. Nevertheless, this may be an indication that African immigrants need to find a racial and ethnic categorization representative of their national origin, within the United States. Although racial and ethnic categorization seems to be an evil in itself, it is a current necessary evil, due to existence as an American phenomenon, both for personal distinctiveness in identification and political solidarity. Another phenomenon found within these borders is that of acculturation, transitioning into the new cultural environments. How do positive and negative elements of acculturation and the act of assimilation of cultures impact the discussion of African immigrants, and in turn, influence their identity? This will be examined within the arena of education.

Acculturation and Assimilation of Identity within Education

Many authors, researchers, and philosophers have proposed that acculturation into ways of functioning in the US educational system and assimilation into the culture, can be a positive transition for an immigrant student, instead of what some would see as the genocidal stripping of their cultural norms and values. Although many of the informants interviewed for this project were raised in families where their native culture was practiced and maintained, they seemed to have implemented this view point at some point

of their educational experience while growing up, hiding and temporally disassociating from various elements of their culture, in order to fit in to the representation of American society that they learned through schooling and peer interactions. Such elements included learning the ideology/practices/ culture, changing physical appearances, dress, disguising name, attempting to forget the language, etc.

Change in ideology, practices, and culture

> I came to find out that this is a materialistic society. I just found out by talking to people and constant interaction with people. I realized that if I can't beat em, I have to join em. I became just as materialistic as they were, so that made me get assimilated into society. I hated high school. When I started to realize that this is the culture that I'm in and it's very materialistic, I [had] to change my ways, I got a job. At first it was really hard because I was working. But in the end, when I started gaining those materialistic things, I want to school and people where like, 'wow, are you a new student? (Green)

> [When we were young], once in while, they made us watch Eritrean videos. My mom always cooks Eritrean food and she tries to teach me how. They always have the music playing. Once in a while, we have to sit with my dad and he just kind of gives us a history of Eritrea and he talks about our family. I just kind of laughed and was like "why are you doing this" and didn't really appreciate it. (Orange)

> It was funny because like all my lighter skin friends got all the girls. Me and Nate and Chris, we never got any girls. Like we would have to go up to them [girls], [but] the girls would go up to my light skinned friends. Sam got all the girls. Rob got all the girls! What's that supposed to mean? And I saw myself doing it, where I didn't like girls who were dark, I didn't like girls who looked like me, and you want the tall slim girl with a different kind of nose and everything like that. (Gold Star)

Physical appearance

> Coming here, my hair was short, because they make you cut it for school. Coming here, my hair was short and people would ask me, "wow, are you a boy", and just all sorts of questions that made me feel bad. (Green)

> And if your hair wasn't curled and s-curled or if wasn't straight you didn't get any. (Gold Star)

Disguising name

> When I came here, my name is * I shortened it to E because I thought that it would be easier for the White people to say. Two year of high school, I changed it [again] because I didn't want anybody asking me, " Are you from Africa and do you guys swing from trees?" Those ridiculous questions. (Green)

> Like at one time I just wanted to change my name because my name was A and I just hated that! To me it's like this; if you can say Janokowski, and all that other shit, you can say my name. It's only eight letters and it's A. It's that simple and it's that easy. I didn't understand that. It just bugged me. I was like "Fuck this". I would just get so mad. (Gold Star)

Forgetting Language

> Well, first it was more of the accent, you know, people in school, the things they know about me. I got the accent going. I learned that in a heart beat. I had to. (Green)

> When I was young I really didn't like it [being African]. Actually, I only started liking it, being able to deal with it, when I lost my accent. When I was in sixth and seventh grade, I lost my accent and it wasn't an outward African-ness. And so then it was easier, because then it wasn't just slapped in your face because people know. They hear you and they're like "oh, you're either Jamaican or African", so what do you make fun of? But when I sound just like, you can't say anything else. My favorite thing from my mom was "if you don't speak Twi you don't eat". That was it. I was about nine and half years old and I was like "no I don't want to" because it was just like a bother you know I just wanted to fit in. I wanted to be the average kid. I wanted to go to school, come home, play football, leave me alone! And it didn't work, my mom wouldn't let that slide, you know. She was like 'if you don't speak it you don't eat'. I wasn't allowed to use the stove and I didn't have a job to buy any food so. It was like they'd push it on me. (Gold Star)

The informants seemed to later retreat from such assimilating viewpoints and struggled to reclaim the tools that assist them in identifying with their particular African culture(s). Such tools include the speaking of the native language (which all the informants are still fluent in), dress, and reclaiming the names that they once hoped to ignore or hide, learning to once again enjoy their culture:

Name

> After a while, it was like 'Whatever'. If I can say some weird name, then why can't people say my name. And then I started saying it. When ever I would say my name, people would ask me, "Oh where is that from, and then I would say, "Oh it's from Nigeria, I lived there for fifteen years", and they would say, "Oh my God, that is wonderful". As opposed to before, I would say, my name is E and I was just another Eddie who happens to be a girl. I started accepting. (Green)

Change in ideologies/ practices/ culture

> I started playing more of my Nigerian music when I came here [college]. My roommate, she was from Turkey, she was from another part of the world, so I found that she wasn't embarrassed to play her music, she wasn't worried if I was going to be like "what music is that". She just played it and enjoyed her music. That really opened my mind and I just

got the kind of music they have in Nigeria, I played it, and sometimes I rent Nigerian movies and watch it in the lounge and I could care less if someone tell me, "oh, what's this, why are they doing this?" That doesn't bother me anymore. (Green)

Now that I'm here, I wish I had that [culture in her parent's home]. Now I tell my sisters, "you need to pay attention" because I miss that now. (Orange)

I feel really comfortable now. Like, I like being African. I totally enjoy it because I think there's always a look for difference in this country. Everyone wants to be different and I don't have to be fake about it. Like lots of people are hippies just because they want to be different, they need to be different. I'm African because I was born that way. I'm African because my parents brought me up that way. I'm African because I look this way. And so that's what makes it really easy and I love it. It's easy now but early on it was rough like knowing who I was and struggling with the whole African thing. (Gold Star)

I just try to stay very close with my family and that would be my main thing. Like sometimes I go on line on Eritrean chat lines. Here , there like really nothing that I could do , but I go visit my sister . Over there, there is a huge Eritrean community. I just hang out with my relatives and stuff. I try to go at least once a year and I try to go home as often as I can. (Orange)

It means something not even just to be from Africa or from Ghana, or even from my region, but from a place where my mom and dad were born. It means a whole lot to them. It means a lot to people there. And she [my mother] was like 'if you don't respect that, it means that you're not respecting me and your dad and your grandmother or your grandfather and a lot of things'. And I just thought about it and I was like, you know what I have a lot of things in my culture and a lot of great things going on for me that most people don't have. (Gold Star)

Language

Sometimes when I get tired of talking in this accent, I just change my accent, and people would be like 'wow' and so that's how I started getting more comfortable with it. (Green)

My mom thinks I'm kind of like losing the language a little bit, so I talk to her more often now. I don't mind talking to my mom. She teaches me new words and stuff. (Orange)

I feel most Ghanaian when I'm with my cousin Betsy and we're just talking, just jabbering in Twi and people are just looking at us. We go out and we yell and we scream and we're just being funny and I feel Ghanaian. (Gold Star)

Dress

And also when I put on a shirt or something. I put on a Ghanaian shirt. Like when I went back home, man I got so many shirts. This one's a little beat up but it's like my favorite shirt, I've worn it like three times already this quarter. (Gold Star)

On the other hand, some of the African immigrants interviewed for this project showed less struggle with issues of their identity and did not attempt to change, hide, or disguise their identity in any way. They instead took joy in the practice of their customs, pride in the use of their name and wearing of traditional clothing, comfort in the speaking of their native language, and solace in the knowledge of their culture. These individuals tended to be older when they immigrated to the United States, indicating that there may have been more stability and awareness in their identity structure before they immigrated to the US, due to the age of immigration. In reference to their perceptions of their identity as Africans or members of their various cultures, some stated:

Name

> I feel really proud. L is the name of my father and my family. I want to be L here because I don't want to be ashamed of my country, my homeland which is Africa, my village, my home city and all that stuff. So when I say "call me L, don't call me N, don't call me E", which is my first name, my French name. Don't call me those names. I want you to call me L. It's like my father was here. My father could [do] everything here if he was here with his life experience. How could he not tell his name? Do you see what I mean? So, that's [what] I'm trying to do with his name. And when someone calls me like him, 'okay', I have some responsibilities to take. So I don't want to make some wrong steps, to give the bad idea to someone else and [for them to] think that 'he's from Africa, all Africans are like that'. So everything I'm doing [is] with his name. (Pink)

Culture, practice, and ideology

> I would say I am a Nigerian, I'm an African, that's how I understand myself as. And if I might want to go even further I probably might say where I come from, where my parents come from, what languages I speak, what I know about my own traditions, that's how I would define myself. (Yellow)

Language

> When I see another Nigerian person, that conversation.... I feel that I'm Nigerian when I speak broken English. It's just like "ah!" It feels so good! And when you see somebody from your part [of Nigeria]. I know a girl that is from my part of Nigeria and we speak broken English. At that moment, it just feels so good! It's just like du-du-du-du---and nobody understands what you're saying. It's like ah! That's when I feel mostly Nigerian. (Yellow)

> When I'm with my family or when I'm speaking my language or if I tell a joke and someone understands. It doesn't have to be in the language, but it's such a Nigerian [way

of saying something]. The only time I get to speak it [Yoruba] here is with my mother and my aunts. (Red)

Dress

When I wear my outfits and go out with my parents and eat together as a family. (Yellow)

Others have chosen a more 'multi-ethnic' identity, and instead, find solace in being able to pass from what seems like one culture to another (African to American/ African to African American). Many of the informants seem to shun the 'American' identity for various reasons. One reason that is given for momentary passing into American identity is political in nature, to acquire the rights, privileges, and perception that an 'American' identification could lead to:

Assuming I am trying to get somewhere or get something. From one hand, they would know that I am Nigerian because of my name, but on the other hand, they are still a bit confused generally. I'm an African, but I speak just like them, and I've been here, so they don't know. But if I want to get something from a bunch of people whom I feel would have those generalized ideas, then I am an American. That way, they won't ask me such ridiculous questions, or they won't be bias, or they won't put up that wall, so it would just be a lot easier. It's more political. (Green)

Another reason given for the lack of identifying one self as 'American' is the inability to identify or be comfortable with the American culture itself, norms, values, and practices. The culture itself does not carry a representation of who they are, a representation which would allow them to identify with it. Informants state:

I don't really describe myself as an American because I don't have the experience that they have, like social norms and the values that they have. Like their ways are really different ones. (Orange)

I don't identify myself as American. I don't identify myself because I don't think that it exists for me. For immigrants, whether you're European or what not. It doesn't exist for us because we're not the mainstream. We're not allowed to be who we want to be. (Gold Star)

For others, identifying as 'American' would be an act that they feel would take away from their African culture, or somehow betray their connection and identification with Africa:

> I don't identify myself as an American. For me, it's like I feel like if I say I am an American I am taking away something, like removing something from who I am. I don't know, it's what I always feel; like I have that fear. Like when my friends say "oh, that's mean, you should be a citizen" but then I feel like if I say I am an American citizen it's like, it's weird. I don't know. I feel like America is something else, it's just like a place that I come and buy something then go back. (Yellow)

At the same time, these informants were conscious of their assimilation in American culture and acknowledge that they may have been forced to become 'Americanized'; to learn the values of the 'white middle-class' culture, in order to survive (Barrett and Roediger, 1997, pg. 3). This somewhat supports Rong and Brown's (2001) assertion of the generational and longitudinal effects of immigration and assimilation on African immigrant students in the United States, acculturation and assimilation increasing with time spent in the US. However, although some of these informants were aware of their Americanization and had various definitions of what it means to them to be Americanized, they were still unwilling to identify themselves as 'American':

> I am becoming Americanized, like I'm going to school, I wear like the right clothes or what they would consider the right clothes, the right communication style and things like that. Like the more time I'm spending here, the more I become Americanized, like just sort of picking up their values and norms, and how to kind of like just socialize with other people, but I don't really consider myself an American. (Orange)

> Well, I think in some sense I am [Americanized], but at the same time I don't feel I'm American. I take pride in my culture, but at the same time, I dress in what would be considered an American [way] or maybe the way I speak. I don't really eat much American foods. (Red)

> We're pushed into certain things. We're forced into being American and being a white person. I associate American with white; a white person who has an established heritage here, like three or four generations. And you can't be American and you can't get all the benefits and all the great and good stuff if you're not. So I'm not American. (Gold Star)

> It's kind of like the nine to five kind of thing. Like from nine to five, I'm at school so I follow those norms and values and fit in, and when I'm at home, I fit in with the whole Eritrean culture and after their norms and values. I just kind of like adapt myself to whatever I'm in (Orange).

In relation to what Americanization is or what becoming an American means to the informants, various definitions were given. Issues involved included the ability to be politically correct in speech and viewpoint on various topics, expectations of privileges, ways of speaking, dressing, and types of foods eaten:

> [I'm] Americanized in the sense that I have fallen for some little things, like, I've become softer to some irrelevant things, as opposed to when I'm in Nigeria. You have to be very blunt. Here, you can't tell someone that they don't look too nice. I've become softer. I think it's more like lies. Like if you really want to tell someone that they look bad, you have to [be politically correct]. (Green)

> Yes, I feel like I've been Americanized. [It's] like the white's speech, the white dress, what I eat and the people I talk to, trying to be white. It's just like to [have] the modern life. (Yellow)

> Oh, yeah I have [been Americanized], Of course. I mean the way I speak now and the way I dress and lots of the views I have. Like in Ghanaian society, even today, women aren't given the same respect they should be. Like girls and women don't get what they should get and in America we're so into the other liberal thing, even if we don't practice it. Women don't get the same paychecks as we [men] do. And there's a lot of things that I don't and can't say because I've been Americanized. And i expect things not necessarily to be really easy, but to be there for me. I've expected resources. Because there's money and there's resources here. I think that's a really American thing, to expect. In Ghana you don't expect anything. You hope you get your days done, you don't mess around with your shit. But here, you expect it to happen. And so I think that's why I'm more Americanized or whatever you want to call it (Gold Star).

Academic Perception

In relation to how these African immigrant informants saw themselves academically within the educational system, their views tend to lean towards a belief in their ability to be successful within the educational system. Ogbu (1991) asserts that voluntary minorities (which may include Africans) have higher expectations as to the return of education than involuntary minorities (African Americans). In accordance, Ainworth-Darnel and Dowey (1998) stated that "individuals from... groups that migrated freely to the host country (immigrant minorities) [Africans] maintain optimistic views of their chances for educational and occupational success" (pg. 536). Although only

three of the seven individuals interviewed had parents who completed a four year college/university education, their educational pursuit is somehow a part of their African identity structure, therefore identifying being African with being an educated person, or having the ability for high performance in education. Many times, they presented the idea of being somewhat unique in their pursuit for education and the accomplishments they achieved, once again distinguishing themselves from other racial and ethnic groups. Reasons given for this uniqueness included the ability to work hard in education, better preparation for education, ability to be successful in education due to the previous factors, and the ability to show different characteristics from the stereotypical perceptions of black or African American students:

Hard work

> Everyone's like "oh, you're black" and I'm like, "no' I'm not black, I'm African or Nigerian". I think it has just made me a better person, more respectful and so forth, more responsible. I'm hard working. (Red)

Preparation for education

> I feel like I could adjust to any situation because schooling there is very intense and grueling, and I feel like after that, coming here, I think it was a little bit easier for me to adjust to school here and the classes. You know how some people complain that it's so much work? I mean I know that it's a lot of work, but being that I've gone through that.... (Red)

Ability to succeed in education

> It seemed like my African friends, my Ghanaian friends and I were always number one, two and three in class, no matter what happened. My high school meant nothing compared to most other places. Because my school was always on the top of the bottom one hundred schools in the state, I just knew that I was going to have a really, really tough time being who I was. (Gold Star)

The ability to be different from other 'black' students

> I think I fit in as this really helpful kid and as a stereotype breaker, because lots of people would be like "there are no black kids who are in the sciences and who are not in Soc. or Black Studies". I'm like, "I'm a Geography major, I have a double major and a minor and like I really like History" and all that stuff. So I think I'm like a little bit of a stereotype breaker in that sense (Gold Star).

Relation to Literature Review

In relation to the literature review conducted, an exploratory study was proposed to explore and begin the understanding of issues related to African immigrants in higher education, with hopes of gaining insight into issues that may affect their ethnic and racial identity formation and maintenance in this arena. There was also a hope of understanding how these issues of identity many affect their retention and success in the higher education arena.

Many issues emerged from this pilot study what were addressed insufficiently in the literature, given the complex nature of the subject matter. For example, the issue of African immigrant students' perceptions of their African American counterparts, and rationale behind these perceptions are seemingly controversial ideas that have never been fully explore for their fallacies or justifications. Is this an area that researchers shy away from and why is this the case if we are researchers in the true sense of the word?

Another issue that is addressed in the racial identity literature, but less frequently directly studied in relation to African immigrants is the idea of their racial identity. Is there a potential for the creation of an 'African' racial identity given the block to check in the census, as I have suggested? Is there a need for Africans to distinguish themselves and their experiences racially and ethnically from those of African Americans and other black immigrants for various reasons that I have postulated? Although I assert that this is the case in the small sample research that I have conducted, I hold the realization that much more data must be collected in order to support this assertion.

A third subject, encompassing the connection between African immigrant identity and education, must also be further explored. Although Ogbu (1991), did prominent research in relation to African American [involuntary minority] oppostional identity towards education and the contrasting African immigrant [voluntary minority] ownership of education, his research did not directly focus on the African immigrants and the nature by which the African immigrant ties his/her identity to education, as postulated by this study. Further research must strive to understand if this is truly the case, ways in which this happens, and the true affects an educational pursuit based identity may have on an African student.

Other Questions for Further Research

In accordance with the above noted questions, other questions have emerged from this pilot study of African immigrants in higher education, that may be examined in further research in the same area. For this particular paper, those questions include, but are not limited to the following idea: If African immigrant students have identities which are intertwined with educational attainment, what is the accuracy and implication of Rong and Brown's (2001) assertion that African immigrants students have a lower rate of college and university degree completion within the United States, than European or Caribbean immigrants; a rate which decreases with generation assimilation into American culture? (pg. 554)

While this question may be addressed in my dissertation study, the elements of the methodology used in the study itself must also be revised in order to take into account what has been learned in the above interviews, and tailored for a more precise understanding of the issues. For example, a question in the survey stated; "Have you encountered any confusion with your racial/ and or ethnic identity after immigrating to the United States? Please describe this confusion, if any". This question was quite convoluted and needed simplification before a response could be received. Such questions will be revised in future research.

Although the methodology of interviewing was most resourceful in communicating with the African immigrants interviewed, further research and a larger sample would be conductive to a survey/questionnaire format. For this reason, the questionnaire will require a detailed revision.

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